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EPA settles with Flint Hills Resources Alaska, LLC, for hazardous waste violations at its North Pole Facility

(Seattle, Washington – September 10, 2014) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reached a settlement with Flint Hills Resources, which owns and operated a petroleum refinery in North Pole, Alaska, for alleged mishandling of hazardous waste generated during groundwater cleanup actions at the refinery.

On June 19, 2013, Flint Hills Resources (FHR) conducted groundwater cleanup activities at its North Pole refinery that generated spent groundwater pre-filters containing iron sulfide. The spent groundwater pre-filters were disposed of in an exposed, uncovered “roll off” container (dumpster) where they soon self-ignited, causing two container fires. The fires required local fire department assistance to extinguish. The settlement includes a civil penalty of \$80,000.

According to Scott Downey, manager of EPA’s Air & Hazardous Waste Compliance Unit in Seattle, under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), waste generators are required to determine whether or not their waste is hazardous at the time of generation, then label it clearly and store it properly.

“In this case, two completely avoidable dumpster fires occurred because the facility’s hazardous waste was not properly identified and managed,” said EPA’s Downey. “Worker and responder safety can be jeopardized when ignitable and reactive wastes are not managed and stored in strict accordance with the law.”

In case documents, EPA alleges:

- FHR violated RCRA by failing to determine that the spent groundwater pre-filters were an “ignitable” and “reactive” hazardous waste, and then failed to manage the materials accordingly.
- FHR mishandled the filter waste by placing it in an uncovered roll off container that was not properly labeled “Hazardous Waste” and dated for storage (as required by federal law).
- FHR hazardous waste was not managed to minimize the possibility of a fire, explosion, or other mishap due to the unstable nature of this this hazardous waste.

RCRA enforcement creates a level playing field for industry, protects people and the environment and insures responsible stewardship in the generation, transportation, treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous waste.

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For more about EPA’s work in enforcing the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, please visit:

<http://www2.epa.gov/enforcement/waste-chemical-and-cleanup-enforcement>